

COAST GUARD RESPONSE POLICY FOR SHIPBOARD VHF-FM DIGITAL SELECTIVE CALLING

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FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC//G-OP//

TO ALDIST

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SUBJ: COAST GUARD RESPONSE POLICY FOR SHIPBOARD VHF-FM DIGITAL
SELECTIVE CALLING

1. SOME COAST GUARD CUTTERS HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED THE ROSS-500 VHF-FM RADIO THAT IS CAPABLE OF DIGITAL SELECTIVE CALLING (DSC). VHF-FM DSC IS PART OF THE GLOBAL MARITIME DISTRESS AND SAFETY SYSTEM (GMDSS) THAT WENT INTO EFFECT ON 1 FEBRUARY 1999, AND REPRESENTS A NEW METHOD OF DISTRESS ALERTING. FCC REGULATIONS HAVE STATED THAT ALL NEW VHF-FM RADIO TYPES APPROVED AFTER 17 JUNE 1999 SHALL HAVE A DSC CAPABILITY. VHF-FM DSC RADIOS ARE ALREADY AVAILABLE COMMERCIALY. GMDSS DESIGNATES THE AREA COVERED BY VHF-FM DSC AS SEA AREA A-1 (TYPICALLY 20 NM FROM THE COAST). ALTHOUGH THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT BE DECLARING "SEA AREA A-1" OPERATIONAL UNTIL THE NATIONAL DISTRESS SYSTEM MODERNIZATION PROJECT IS FULLY OPERATIONAL IN 2004, DEPLOYMENTS OF THE ROSS-500 VHF-FM DSC RADIO WILL CONTINUE IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF RADIO REPLACEMENT AND NEW CUTTER CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS. UPON INSTALLATION, TISCOM PERSONNEL WILL PROVIDE FAMILIARIZATION TRAINING ON THE ROSS-500 DSC RADIO TO SELECT CUTTER CREWMEMBERS.

2. THESE RADIOS MAINTAIN A CONTINUOUS RADIO GUARD ON VHF-FM CHANNEL 70, DESPITE THE CHANNEL YOU TUNE MANUALLY ON THE FRONT PANEL. AS SUCH, CUTTERS EQUIPPED WITH THESE DSC RADIOS COULD RECEIVE A DSC DISTRESS ALERT ON CHANNEL 70. WHEN A DSC DISTRESS ALERT IS RECEIVED, THE ROSS-500 RADIO WILL EMIT A LOUD AUDIO ALARM. THIS ALARM SHALL BE CONSIDERED THE EQUIVALENT OF A "MAYDAY" CALL, AND REQUIRES THE SAME LEVEL OF RESPONSE.

3. COAST GUARD CUTTERS RECEIVING A DSC DISTRESS ALERT SHALL:

- A. AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, INFORM THE CO/OINC OF THE CONTENTS OF THE DISTRESS ALERT.
- B. IN AREAS WHERE RELIABLE VHF-FM COMMUNICATIONS WITH ONE OR MORE SHORE STATIONS ARE FEASIBLE, CO/OINC'S SHOULD DEFER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR A SHORT INTERVAL (TYPICALLY, APPROXIMATELY ONE MINUTE) SO THAT RECEIPT MAY BE ACKNOWLEDGED BY A SHORE STATION.

C. IN AREAS WHERE RELIABLE VHF-FM DSC COMMUNICATIONS WITH A SHORE STATION ARE NOT FEASIBLE, CUTTERS THAT RECEIVE A VHF-FM DSC DISTRESS FROM A SHIP, MUST AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE DISTRESS AND INFORM THE APPLICABLE RCC (AND OPCON/TACON, IF DIFFERENT) BY THE MOST EXPEDIENT MEANS. RELEVANT INFORMATION THAT COULD BE AVAILABLE INCLUDES THE DISTRESS VESSEL'S MARITIME MOBILE SERVICE IDENTITY (MMSI) NUMBER, POSITION, AND NATURE OF DISTRESS. THIS INFORMATION IS NORMALLY INCLUDED IN THE DSC ALERT AND CAN BE RETRIEVED VIA THE ROSS-500 RADIO DISPLAY.

D. CUTTERS ACKNOWLEDGING RECEIPT OF A DISTRESS ALERT IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPHS B OR C OF THIS MESSAGE SHOULD:

(1) ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE ALERT ON THE VHF VOICE DISTRESS CHANNEL 16 AND ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DISTRESS VESSEL.

(2) IF UNABLE TO ESTABLISH VOICE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DISTRESS SHIP, CUTTERS SHALL ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE DISTRESS ALERT USING THE ROSS-500 DSC ACKNOWLEDGMENT FUNCTION.

(3) CUTTERS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF DISTRESS ALERTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROSECUTING THAT DISTRESS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS AN RCC ASSUMES PROSECUTION RESPONSIBILITY.

4. THIS POLICY HAS BEEN COORDINATED WITH G-S. THE INTENT OF THIS MESSAGE IS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH GMDSS DSC OPERATING PROCEDURES WHILE ENSURING THAT OUR SHORESIDE SEARCH AND RESCUE FACILITIES ARE INFORMED OF ALL DSC INITIATED DISTRESS CALLS WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE AORS.

5. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.

6. RELEASED BY RADM JAMES D. HULL, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS POLICY.

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